



Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve

Conservation plan



March 2003

1. Plan and description

1.1. Geographic location, boundaries and dimensions

The plan of the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve and its location are shown on the maps in Schedules A.1 and A.2.

The proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve is located in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue administrative region, between 47°44' and 48°02' latitude north and 77°22' and 77°56' longitude west. It is situated roughly 10 km to the south of Val-d'Or. The southwest boundary is adjacent to the Caribous-de-Jourdan ecological reserve, and the Decelles reservoir.

The proposed biodiversity reserve is entirely within the territory of Ville de Val-d'Or, which is part of municipalité régionale de comté de la Vallée-de-l'Or.

The proposed reserve has a network of forest roads accessible from the north and from the east, off Highway 117.

The proposed reserve covers a total area of 378 km². The boundaries have been defined, as far as possible, using natural elements easily identified in the field, such as watercourses, lakes and the edges of peat bogs.

1.2. Ecological overview

The proposed biodiversity reserve is in the natural province of the Abitibi and James Bay Lowlands. It protects habitats representative of the natural region of the Abitibi Plain.

1.2.1. Representative elements

Climate: The proposed biodiversity reserve is at the interface of two major types of continental climate: two-thirds of the reserve, to the south, is characterized by a mild, subpolar and subhumid climate with a long growing season, while the northern third of the reserve is characterized by a subpolar, subhumid climate with a medium growing season. The proposed reserve belongs to the bioclimatic field of fir stands with white birch.

Geology and geomorphology: The reserve is part of the Superior geologic province, whose bedrock is archaic (> 2.5 billion years). To the east, the substratum is mainly formed by silicic rock, while to the west it is mainly formed by felsic rock. The bedrock rises to the surface in places and is covered by glacial lacustrine sediments (clay, sand and gravel) deposited by the waters of the proglacial Barlow-Ojibway lake. The landscape forms a plain sloping slightly northwards with occasional hummocks. The average altitude is 348 m, varying between 331 m and 367 m.

Hydrography: The proposed reserve straddles the watersheds of the Outaouais river to the south and the Harricana river to the north. It has around sixty lakes, which occupy roughly 7% of the total area. The largest is Sabourin lake, covering an area of 26.5 km². The proposed biodiversity reserve also includes a small part (4.5 km²) of the Decelles hydroelectric reservoir. The drainage system is fairly well developed, and is made up mainly of intermittent watercourses. It is subparallel, generally oriented north-south, and follows the main fractures in the bedrock.

Vegetation: Over half the proposed reserve is covered by forest, and two-thirds of the forest cover comprises groups of tolerant softwoods. Black spruce (*Picea mariana*), jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*) and larch (*Larix laricina*) are the dominant species. Mixed stands occupy 7% of the land. Stands aged 90 years or more constitute 15% of the forest cover. Many peat bogs have developed in the eastern section, because of the low relief and the impermeability of the surface deposits. One third of the proposed reserve is covered by peat bogs. Logging has been carried out in recent years in the sectors of Kâmackawâkâmagak, Okiwakamik and Crémazie lakes, and in the zone to the east of Médaille lake. In addition, replanting work was carried out between 1994 and 1998 to the west of Okiwakamik lake and to the south of Kâockimâkidinak lake.

1.2. Outstanding elements

The proposed reserve has great interest from an ecological point of view, since it is home to a residual population of Woodland Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) that were formerly more abundant in southern Québec. The herd is sedentary, in both summer and winter, a feature that distinguishes it from the population in northern Québec, which migrates. Another feature is that the Val-d'Or Woodland Caribou is a forest ecotype, whereas the northern species is tied to the tundra. The herd is found between Highway 117, to the north, and the northern boundary of the La Vérendrye wildlife sanctuary to the south; according to the census taken in 1999, it contains around fifty individuals. The decline of this species has been caused mainly by the changes to its habitat caused by logging. The size of the herd continues to fall, and the situation of this forest population is precarious. The Val-d'Or Woodland Caribou has, since 1996, been on the list of the wild species likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable (M.O. 2000-015 dated 16 May 2000).

The proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve includes, to the north, part of the habitat used by the Woodland Caribou between April and November. Regularly, each year, a number of individuals disperse in this area to calve. The proposed biodiversity reserve also includes, to the south, stands of softwoods that are often used as a food source by the whole herd.

1.3. Land occupation and use

The land occupations and uses in the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve are shown on the map in Schedule A.3.

The road network is the only human disturbance. It has a total length of 111 km, and comprises 51% of unpaved roads and 45% of roads unsuitable for road vehicles. Paved roads suitable for road vehicles make up only 4% of the network.

Land rights have been granted on 47 sites:

- 3 private cottage sites;
- 14 cottage leases;
- 30 leases for rough shelters.

Almost all the proposed reserve lies within the Grand-Lac-Victoria beaver reserve, where the Algonquin community of Anishnabe residing on the west shore of Simon lake, 32 km to the southeast of Val-d'Or, has special rights regarding the hunting and trapping of fur-bearing animals.

Some parts of the land were logged before the reserve was created.

2. Protection status

The proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve protects part of the vital habitat for one of only three herds of Woodland Caribou remaining in Québec south of the 49th parallel.

The conservation objectives are:

- ✓ the sustainability of the Val-d'Or population of Woodland Caribou through the protection of the habitats essential to its survival, especially calving, rutting and wintering areas;
- ✓ the preservation of biodiversity in wetland and forest ecosystems;
- ✓ the development of certain key elements in the landscape;
- ✓ the maintenance of traditional Native subsistence activities;
- ✓ the acquisition of new knowledge concerning the ecology of the Val-d'Or population of Woodland Caribou.

3. Activities within the reserve

All activities carried on within the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve are governed by the provisions of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act* (S.Q. 2002, c. 74).

This conservation plan does not specify any prohibited activity other than those prohibited in biodiversity reserves by the Act; nor does it authorize any other activities, or set any additional constraints on the activities permitted by the Act.

3.1. Prohibited activities

For reference purposes, it is important to note that under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, the main activities prohibited in an area designated as a proposed biodiversity reserve are:

- mining, and gas or petroleum development;
- mining, gas or petroleum exploration, brine and underground reservoir exploration, prospecting, and digging or boring, where such activities necessitate stripping, the digging of trenches, excavation or deforestation;
- forest management activities within the meaning of section 3 of the *Forest Act* (R.S.Q., c. F-4.1);
- the development of hydraulic resources and any production of energy on a commercial or industrial basis;
- any new allocation of a right to occupy land for vacation resort purposes;
- earthwork, backfilling or construction work.

3.2. Activities governed by other Acts

All activities carried on within the boundaries of the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve remain governed by the other applicable legislative and regulatory provisions, including those that require the issue of a permit or authorization or the payment of fees. The carrying on of certain activities may also be prohibited or limited by other Acts or regulations applicable within the boundaries of the proposed biodiversity reserve.

In particular, within the boundaries of the proposed biodiversity reserve, special legal rules may govern permitted and prohibited activities in connection with:

- **Archaeological research** (especially the measures contained in the *Cultural Property Act* [R.S.Q., c. B-4];

- **Utilisation of wildlife resources** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the conservation and development of wildlife* [R.S.Q., c. C-61.1] and the regulation on beaver reserves, and, where applicable, the measures contained in any applicable federal legislation);
- **Access** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* [R.S.Q., c. T-8.1]);
- **Land rights** (especially the measures contained in the *Act respecting the lands in the domain of the State* [R.S.Q., c. T-8.1] and in leases issued by the Minister of Natural Resources).

3.3. Supervision of activities

The Minister of the Environment is responsible for the application of the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, and is also responsible for the proposed biodiversity reserves established under that Act. The Minister will supervise and monitor the measures contained in the Act with regard to permitted activities in protected areas.

All other government departments and bodies will retain their responsibilities as set out in all the legislative and regulatory texts that apply within a proposed biodiversity reserve.

The Minister of Natural Resources will supervise all activities subject to the Minister's authority within the territory of the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve, in particular as regards permitted forms of land occupation.

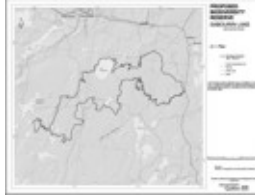
The Société de la faune et des parcs du Québec (FAPAQ) remains responsible for supervising the activities relating to wildlife protection and management that are under its responsibility.

4. Permanent protection status

The permanent protection status envisaged for the reserve is "biodiversity reserve" status under the *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*.

Schedules

A.1. Plan of the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve (provisional name)



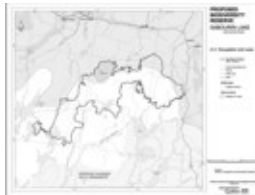
[Click to enlarge](#)

A.2. Map showing the location of the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve (provisional name)



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A.3. Map showing land occupation and use in the proposed Sabourin lake biodiversity reserve (provisional name)



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